Towards a More Productive Military-Media Relationship

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In an effort to explain how the military can better engage the media, this paper provides insights to the question, "How can the U.S. military proactively engage the domestic media in the planning and execution of military operations?" By proactively engaging the media, the military can better leverage the media and take advantage of its tremendous capability to influence public opinion. This paper investigates the importance of an effective military-media relationship, considers current Joint doctrine, and conducts a historic review (using the criteria of access, logistical support, operational security and context) of the relationship between the military and the media, focusing on how the military engaged the media in those operations and how the military can leverage the media to benefit future operations.

To that end, and centered on the idea that public affairs is not just a PAO's issue, the military should make improvements in the following areas: (1) Establishment of media effects as an information age principle of war; (2) Continued use of embedded reporters, expanding on the current program to ensure coverage to include the post-hostilities phase; (3) Develop a more proactive approach towards dealing with foreign media; and (4) Promotion of a more assertive media policy to achieve a steady-state level of military-media engagement.

In an era during which an increasingly smaller percentage of Americans have any contact with the military, the military must take the lead to develop a positive working relationship with the press and the public. In doing so, the military will provide the links that not only benefit it now, but in the future.

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Abstract

Towards a More Productive Military-Media Relationship by MAJ Edward L. English, U.S. Army, 58 pages.

In an effort to explain how the military can better engage the media, this paper provides insights to the question, "How can the U.S. military proactively engage the domestic media in the planning and execution of military operations?" By proactively engaging the media, the military can better leverage the media and take advantage of its tremendous capability to influence public opinion. This paper investigates the importance of an effective military-media relationship, considers current Joint doctrine, and conducts a historic review (using the criteria of access, logistical support, operational security and context) of the relationship between the military and the media, focusing on how the military engaged the media in those operations and how the military can leverage the media to benefit future operations.

The historical record shows that while the military is willing to address symptoms of its strained relationship with the media, it tends not to address the long-term underlying reasons for that tension—one of the reasons different conflicts have brought about different media policies. Knowing the tensions that exist between the two institutions will never completely evaporate, the military must consider what it can do to minimize the effects of those tensions. A complete plan to leverage the media is the key to a successful military-media relationship. It must be a continual process and those engaged in the dialogue must be truthful and forthright.

By increasing recognition of the importance of media engagement in doctrine, the military can better take advantage of the force multiplier effects the media can provide the military. To that end, and centered on the idea that public affairs is not just a PAO's issue, the military should make improvements in the following areas: (1) Establishment of media effects as an information age principle of war; (2) Continued use of embedded reporters, expanding on the current program to ensure coverage to include the post-hostilities phase; (3) Develop a more proactive approach towards dealing with foreign media; and (4) Promotion of a more assertive media policy to achieve a steady-state level of military-media engagement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction & Background: The Importance of an Effective Military-Media Relationship

When one thinks of the organization dedicated to protecting and defending the

Constitution of the United States, one tends to think of the military. While this is true, another

important institution also protects and defends the Constitution. That institution is the media.

While many in the military stereotypically tend to view the media with a certain amount of

cynicism and distrust, the role the media with respect to the functioning of both our government

and society in general is vitally important. The media not only plays this critical role by

recording, analyzing and broadcasting the events of the day but by monitoring the functions of

private and public institutions in an attempt to protect the rights of Americans.

Since both institutions protect the United States, it would seem logical that they might

work together. This however, does not accurately portray the often-adversarial relationship

between the military and the media. This relationship developed largely because of the Vietnam

War and exacerbated, at times, by both the military's treatment of the media in post-Vietnam

operations and the reality that news coverage of military operations is not always positive. As

much as some in the military seek to distance themselves from the media though, the military, in

this relatively new era of instant global communications and 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week

news coverage, does not have the luxury to dismiss or distance itself from the media. The

attitude expressed in the statement, "it is in the nature of the press to deliver bad news"[1] in 1995

by then former Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, and generally accepted by military

members, represents a military hesitant to proactively engage the media.

Mass media will be present wherever the military deploys, often ahead of the military,

and it will shape the public's perception of both the mission and the military, regardless of the

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[1]Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence, *America's Team; The Odd Couple. A Report on the Relationship Between the Media and the Military* (Nashville, TN: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995), 103.

military's input. Yet the American public does not want a military that operates in secrecy.[2] As a result, the military must adjust its cultural attitude towards the media and inculcate a broader acceptance of it. By proactively engaging the media and aiding in its better understanding of the military and its operations, the American public and to a certain extent an international audience, will gain a greater appreciation of the military and the manner in which it conducts operations. If news coverage (national and international) and hence public opinion is positive, the planning and execution of operations will be facilitated by an understanding that the military is doing everything within its power to execute missions in manners accepted by society. In an effort to explain how the military can better engage the media, this paper will provide insights to the question, "How can the U.S. military proactively engage the domestic media in the planning and execution of military operations?"

For the purposes of this paper, Merriam-Webster's definition of media as a plural noun descriptive of "agencies of mass communication" is most appropriate, as it is general enough to include all forms of mass communication and those organizations that formally attempt to collect and report on events. Additionally, this paper will mainly address the American media. By proactively engaging the media, the military can better leverage the media and take advantage of its tremendous capability to influence public behavior and opinion. This paper investigates the importance of an effective military-media relationship, considers current Joint doctrine, and conducts a limited historic review of the relationship between the military and the media starting with Vietnam, focusing on how the military engaged the media in those operations and how the military can leverage the media to benefit future operations.

This monograph will use the following evaluation criteria to assess the military's media engagement effectiveness during the Vietnam War, Urgent Fury (Grenada), Just Cause (Panama), Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom (Iraq): The timely access the military provided to the

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[2]Ibid., 47.

media in regards to plans, operations and service members; whether the military provided the

requisite context of the military operation in order to better truthfully inform the press and the

American public; whether the military provided the logistics support required for the press; and,

how effectively the military balanced operational security considerations with the media's desire

to report. Discussion of how the media impacts public perception as well as how it shapes policy

which eventually impacts operations also will be discussed since that may be the result of

effective media engagement by the military. But before asking how the military can best engage

the media, we must answer the question, Why the military should engage the media?

Why the Military Should Engage the Media?

> Edmund Burke said that there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporter's Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact…printing which comes necessarily out of writing, I say often, is the equivalent of Democracy: Invent writing, Democracy is inevitable. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garniture; the requisite thing is that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite.

> Thomas Carlyle, Nineteenth Century British Historian[3]

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; **or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press**; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

> First Amendment to the United States Constitution[4]

The notion of the media as the Fourth Estate seems to apply to twenty-first century

America even more than it did to nineteenth-century Great Britain. And increasingly, with the

advent of satellite television and the Internet, it applies to the rest of the world as well -- even

those countries often thought of as having only state-run media. Around the world, media

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[3]"The Mass Media as the Fourth Estate," available from http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk /MUHome/cshtml/media/4estate.html; Internet; accessed 1 September 2004.
       [4]*United States Constitution* , 15 December 1791, available from http://www.house.gov/Constitution/Constitution.html; Internet; accessed 22 September 2004.

increasingly plays watchdog to governments and non-governmental organizations and therefore

helps define the perceptions and realities of people around the world. Since the mass media, as

an institution, has the role of watchdog, it increasingly determines, often ahead of policy makers,

the agenda of political discussion. News and images beamed around the world impact the way a

nation's public perceives and reacts to events. In response, the public shapes political debate,

affecting a nation's policies.

This public debate cycle has a direct impact on the military. When the public debate has

military implications, the media affects the reasons and means by which the military fights wars

and how it institutes various military internal policies. In this vein, the free press acts as an

eyewitness to the events of one of America's most public institutions; sometimes forging and

sometimes splintering the bond between the citizen and soldier. It does so by providing a means

of checks and balances that sustains the confidence of the American people in their political

system and armed forces.[5] In essence, therefore, that clause of the First Amendment that

discusses freedom of the press protects the press not for its own good but for the good of the

public.[6] Regardless of what members of the military may think about the media, whether it

represents the truth or the truth's distortion, the military defends the media. By swearing to

"protect and defend the Constitution," the military is also protecting the freedom of the press. In

the First Amendment, which explicitly provides for freedom of the press, the Founding Fathers

intended that the media should play the role of the Fourth Estate.[7] As such, the military should

recognize that the media plays a vital role in the functioning of the government and nation.

In an effort to forge a more positive bond between the military and the media, the

military must take a proactive role in the development and continual fostering of a more positive

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[5]John J. Fialka, *Hotel Warriors: Covering the Gulf War* (Baltimore, MD: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1991), xiv.

[6]Michelle Ferrari and James Tobin, *Reporting America at War* (New York: Goodhue Pictures, Inc., 2003), 228.

[7]Ibid., Aukofer, viii.

relationship. As part of a democratic government, the military requires public support to sustain

its operations. This is especially true if the operations have the potential to be long term.[8] And in

the American style of warfare, the public demands to be kept abreast of the military's progress,

and the dominant conduit that reaches the greatest number of the American public is mass media.

In an effort to influence not only what but also how the mass media discusses the military, the

armed forces must take the initiative and engage the media, and not expect the media to interpret

the military's actions exactly the way the military views them. This need to engage the media is

especially important since there is, in effect, a professional cultural divide between the military

and the media. The military must bridge this cultural divide that has evolved since the end of the

draft in 1973 and which separates journalists from the military.[9] That divide has resulted in a

press corps that is largely devoid of resident military experts.

Aside from the cultural differences that separate both institutions, the military must

realize that the media is a business. As such, competition exists that, in a free market, cause

media organizations to operate on short timelines. Since journalists largely do not possess the

resident knowledge or experience with regards to military issues, and they must produce stories

under relatively short deadlines, they must rely heavily on the military to provide them

information in order to meet their suspense. If the military does not aid them however, the press

will still meet their deadlines. Written and edited in a rush, the stories journalists' produce may

not best represent the truth in its entirety or the story may be improperly framed due to a lack of

perspective.[10] In their effort to produce stories in a time-constrained environment, journalists will

simply reach for the "lowest hanging fruit" and report the most easily observed or what results in

the most spectacular images. Therefore, the military must engage the media to stave off false

reporting and at a minimum, assist in the presentation of the truth. In this regard, "cooperation

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[8]Ray Eldon Hiebert, "Public Relations as a Weapon of Modern Warfare," *Public Relations Review*, Summer 1991, 108.
[9]Ibid., Aukofer, 98.
[10]Ibid., Ferrari, 4.

between media and military serves the interests of the American public, the media and the military."[11] Finally, the press, while recording current events for immediate consumption, also records the first cut of history.

While not as immediate, it is important that history cast the military in a truthful manner. "The ways wars are reported has a profound effect on the way they are remembered and understood—and hence, on our ability as citizens to make reasoned judgments about our nation's military actions abroad."[12] When President George H.W. Bush talked about the military finally breaking out of the chains that had bound it since Vietnam, he was not only referring to its ability to win wars (as it had already done in several actions between Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War) but to how the general public regarded the military. While the veterans received little recognition on their return from Vietnam, the nation greeted the military's success in the Persian Gulf War with ticker tape parades. The lack of confidence Americans held for the military took over a quarter-century to dissolve and the military's victory in the Persian Gulf War finally put to rest that lack of confidence.

The military cannot afford such a division to exist between it and the public again. The historic result of the division caused by America's Vietnam experience was two decades of military re-building. In the wake of Vietnam, the military received little respect in America's public consciousness. As an indicator of this, a Harris poll reported in the *Wall Street Journal* reflected that only 22 percent of Americans considered a military officer a prestigious profession in 1982. In the wake of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, a Gallup poll showed that 85 percent of the public had a high level of confidence in the military. And finally, that same survey that

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[11]Ibid., Aukofer, vii.
[12]Ibid., Ferrari, 4.

showed only 22 percent of Americans thought a military officer was prestigious had evolved to the point that in 2002, 47 percent did -- the third most respected profession in America.[13]

Joint Doctrine

Given the importance of the media to the military and the public, relatively little Joint doctrine exists that addresses media relations. Regardless, the doctrine that does exist provides a framework with which both public affairs personnel and operational commanders can address media considerations. From doctrine and historical hindsight, one can derive evaluation criteria with which to compare the military's media engagement policies. This chapter will highlight four Joint publications that inform the military of the importance of effective media engagement and provide specific details concerning how to engage the media.

Capstone Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, provides a broad explanation as to the importance of effectively engaging the media. It stresses that the military operates within a democratic context whereby the American people are free to express their views in regards to the employment of military forces. The public's concerns regarding the legitimacy, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the U.S. military have an effect on the activities of the armed forces. Further, JP 1 acknowledges that information is readily available to the public from multiple sources. Since this is the case, the military must ensure that the media have as much access, given security considerations, to the military in order to provide accurate and timely information to the public.[14] As this paper will illustrate, the military's and the media's definition of access is not usually the same, and the notion of access will cause the greatest consternation in the military-media relationship.

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[13]"Which Career Fields Do People Respect?" available from http://www.careerjournal.com/partners/jobhunting/change/20021024-harrispoll.html#top; Internet; accessed 11 November 2004.

[14]U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, JP 1* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2000), I-4 - I-5.

JP 3-61, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations*, is the primary document that

addresses how the military should engage the media. JP 3-61 reiterates the importance of

engaging the military in light of the democratic process, and the importance of access. It further

outlines specific guidance commanders and public affairs personnel should follow when engaging

the media and the public in general. JP 3-61 frames its discussion in the contemporary media

operating environment with the realization that, "today's news is formed by images which often

move faster than the journalists can provide explanation and context."[15] It stresses that because

of the effects of modern technology, public affairs personnel must have the savvy of the media,

proactively engaging the media and anticipating future requests. "To do otherwise simply places

the military in a defensive, catch-up role."[16] JP 3-61 also stresses the need for an effective public

affairs plan to consider the logistical support required to support modern media. Planning and

support considerations for personnel, transportation, communications and other technical

resources need addressing to help ensure the public affairs plan can be executed.

JP 3-61 spells out the nine Department of Defense (DOD) Media Guidelines adopted

after the Persian Gulf War (See Appendix A). Summarized, these stress the importance of access

and independent reporting with no interference from military personnel, given that the

credentialed journalists follow military ground rules established to maintain operational security.

Additionally, the guidelines spell out that the military must provide logistics support to journalists

in a combat zone. These requirements dovetail with more in-depth public affairs responsibilities

of combatant and supporting commanders, including the requirement to develop public affairs

annexes that support the operation. These principles and responsibilities further nest in the DOD

Principles of Information, which states that the public should have access to readily available,

censorship free information, regardless of whether or not it is embarrassing to the government.

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[15]U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations, JP 3-61*
(Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1997), I-2.
[16]Ibid.

Finally, JP 3-13 and JP 3-57, *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations* and *Joint Doctrine for Civil Military Operations* respectively, stress the need for the integration of Public Affairs (PA) and media engagement with both the information and civil-military operations plans. Not repeating the general themes they have in common with both JP 1 and JP 3-61, each has a unique perspective to consider when engaging the media. JP 3-13 highlights the fact that the news media can have a significant impact on a country's national will and hence political considerations. JP 3-57 urges commanders to consider the effects of the media on other nations and how reporting may effect another country's political landscape.

Not specifically addressed in doctrine, yet made apparent in the military-media relationship during the Vietnam War is the need for the operational commander to provide an operational and strategic context for its actions. Context provides the media and the public a sense that operations take place not in vacuum but in some greater framework that steadily works towards the political leader's goals. Without a broader sense of understanding, individual military actions will seem inconsistent. The notion of operational context during a campaign is particularly important when military actions are long in duration. During shorter military actions, the political debate that nowadays precedes larger-scale military operations provides initial strategic context—the reason military action should be undertaken in the first place.

Joint doctrine also does not adequately addresses the importance of media planning by the combatant commander. Perhaps as the emerging concept of effects based operations evolve, media planning may gain greater visibility. The fact remains that military victory is not simply determined by putting sufficient boots on the ground and dropping planeloads of bombs. True military victory only comes when the enemy thinks he or she is defeated. Likewise, the American public does not necessarily equate military victory with the destruction of an enemy's regime and army. Winning the peace is as important if not more important than winning the war. Effective media engagement is one avenue to achieve this.

While doctrine provides a starting point from which planning can take place, and together with historical analysis can provide a means for evaluation operations, political leaders and their public relations staffs, cognizant of the effects of the media, will determine how the media is engaged during a major operation. The Secretary of Defense, at minimum, will determine media coverage upon the recommendation of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Due to the potential for political ramifications, Pentagon leadership plays an active role in determining how the military will engage the media, considering the operational and strategic objectives as well as the risk political leaders are willing to take with respect to the amount and type of coverage an operation might receive.

Origins of Conflict: The Media's Coverage of Vietnam

Our worst enemy seems to be the press.[17]

President Richard M. Nixon, 1971

The animosity expressed by President Nixon in the above quote, although indicative of the attitude between the military and the government and the press by the end of the Vietnam War, belies the relative harmony and respect that existed between the two institutions during prior wars and at the beginning of the Vietnam conflict. This attitude would escalate after the Tet Offensive in 1968, and continue to sour until the end of the war. A press that rarely questioned assertions forwarded by the U.S. mission in Saigon and generally showed great sympathy for soldiers highlighted this period of harmony. The military allowed the press great latitude in reporting while at the same time rejected censorship. Indeed, the military provided only general guidelines that requested that the press promise to maintain security.[18] Likewise, during both World War II and the Korean conflict, the relationship between the military and the press was positive, each realizing that greater benefit lay in cooperation rather than confrontation. Most

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[17]William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam, Media & Military at War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998), ix.
[18]Ibid., 291.

reporters donned uniforms and many participated in the battles and campaigns side by side with the service members they were covering.

In World War II, reporters covering particular armies received daily briefings on conditions at the front and then had the opportunity to go to front line units via military transport. Once there, they had one-on-one access to front line soldiers and interviews and the military did not monitor them on the spot. In filing reports however, there was a censorship process. The absence of graphic photos showing the dead, or stories that discussed the harsher realities of combat such as "combat fatigue"[19] and the generally positive reporting coupled with government anti-Axis public affairs efforts was meant to shore up public support.[20]

Moreover, because the nation's leaders, soldiers and news media agreed that the purpose of the war was not only necessary but justified, all worked together well.[21] By the end of the Vietnam War however, this era of cooperation between the military and the media would come to a halt. To understand how this relationship degenerated, one must examine how news organizations actually reported the war; their interaction with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV); the reaction to the press from the operational and strategic levels; and finally, the reaction from the public.

While we now view modern media as having an almost omnipresent pervasiveness, the press corps that covered the Vietnam War was anything but omnipresent. During the initial days of U.S. involvement in Vietnam in 1964, there were only 20 American and foreign correspondents covering the conflict. This number started to grow larger with the commitment of U.S. troops in 1965 and finally reached its peak approximately two weeks before the Tet offensive. At that time, there were 464 men and women accredited as reporters by MACV. Of

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[19]Ibid., 22.

[20]This is not to infer that only "sanitized" photos were published in the press, but very few photos showing U.S. dead were published in main stream newspapers. This is especially true considering the size and length of World War II.

[21]Ibid., Ferrari, 7.

them, 179 were American and of that group perhaps 60 were actual correspondents; the remaining 119 accredited persons being support staff.

Most worked for one of the top tier newspapers or magazines such as *The New York Times* or *Newsweek* or one of the three major U.S. television networks: CBS, NBC and ABC.[22] Adding to this list were correspondents from the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI). Although directly comparing the number of reporters that covered Vietnam and the ground campaign of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) does not take in to account the sheer number of media outlets that exist today compared to the late 1960s, it is still an example of how and perhaps why Vietnam was reported so inadequately. At the height of the Vietnam War, when approximately 500,000 U.S. soldiers were deployed, there was approximately one reporter for every 1,077 soldiers—compared to the over 700 embedded reporters covering the 140,000 soldiers in OIF—a ratio of one embedded reporter to every 200 soldiers.[23]

The importance of the number of reporters speaks to the press's ability to provide breadth, depth of coverage and context. In the case of Vietnam, the ability to provide a breadth of information that would put the conflict in context was limited.[24] All Western news organizations based their operations in Saigon and as such, they generally all knew and associated with each other. Despite this, however, they did not share information. Each brought their competitive American news business model to Vietnam and competed for news stories. Reporters spent much of their time ensuring that they were not getting "scooped," devoting most of the efforts towards "matching coverage."[25] Meanwhile, television networks and the larger newspapers sought out dramatic footage or front-page quality photos and stories. While Vietnam was evolving into a conflict that would eventually lead the United States to its first defeat, the capability of the press

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[22]Peter Braestrup, *Big Story* (Stoughton, MA: The Alpine Press, 1977), 6-10.
[23]Joe Strupp, "Only 23 Embedded Reporters Left in Iraq," available from www.editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/headline/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1930436; Internet; accessed 23 October 2004.
[24]Ibid., Braestrup, 11.
[25]Ibid.

gradually increased, but not to a level that had the ability or capacity to report a confusing war in a context that made sense to the American public. The U.S. media's lack of resources, coupled with a desire to only provide enough news (with very little objective analysis) to keep up with other news agencies greatly limited the news and just as importantly, the context within which the public could understand the true nature of the war. To make matters worse, after 1968, the U.S. military hindered the media's ability to report on Vietnam accurately.

During the war, there were two offices jointly responsible for providing public affairs support to the media, the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) and the MACV Office of Information (MACOI). JUSPAO's primary mission was to work with the government of South Vietnam in developing propaganda directed at the South Vietnamese people. It also served as an "extremely helpful logistics center for newsmen."[26] During the critical years surrounding Tet, Barry Zorthian, a career United States Information Service (USIS) veteran that had been in Vietnam since 1964, directed JUSPAO. The office ran daily military news briefings, sarcastically known as the "Five O'Clock Follies," and coordinated logistical support to reporters who wanted to go the field. Aside from the director, the Americans that worked at JUSPAO had little Vietnam experience, as they served no longer than 18 months in country. Correspondents generally regarded JUSPAO positively because Zorthian provided background information to them. Additionally, Zorthian read them into reports ostensibly coded as "SECRET"—making the reporters feel that they were truly getting credible, timely prime information. The helpfulness provided by JUSPAO waned between 1966 and 1968 as Zorthian felt "pressured" by MACV to present the "bright side" of U.S. efforts.[27]

The MACV Office of Information (MACOI) headed by BG Winant K. Sidle presented the official voice of MACV. MACOI prepared the daily military briefing presented at the JUSPAO. The daily briefings were a compilation of daily operational reports from field

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[26]Ibid., 14.
[27]Ibid.

commanders brought together at the MACV operations center. The problem with this report was that the information could be largely disparate and not linked to larger operational themes or efforts—it was data without context. While not deliberately misleading, it could be misleading. Presenting this information was an officer only going to be in country 12 months and often ignorant of the greater operational context and not able to answer detailed questions. The increasing ineffectiveness of the daily briefings presented by MACOI developed for several reasons, the most important of which was that MACOI effort was a victim of the MACV bureaucracy that regarded the press as unavoidable.

The general ineffectiveness of the disjointed PAO efforts between the JUSPAO and the MACOI, and the inability of the press to report on the larger picture became readily apparent in and around the Tet offensive. To learn about military movements and tactics, reporters had to see Brigadier General Sidle or his staff, who received information from MACV. Because of the continually changing nature of the offensive, MACOI was not able to keep up with events as they unfolded, forcing reporters, who had daily deadlines to meet, to speculate as to the progress of the counteroffensive.[28] When MACOI finally gained a coherent picture of what was occurring, the information given to the press did not agree with the news coming from reporters in the field. To illustrate this point one must consider that "roughly nine out of ten firsthand newspaper stories, wire service dispatches, and TV reports from the battlefield during Tet were from Saigon, Khe Sanh, and Hue."[29] These larger engagements were easier for reporters to cover and fit television's desire for more dramatic footage. They were not; however, indicative of the military's counteroffensive across Vietnam. They inaccurately reported that victory on the Vietnam battlefield was very much in doubt when in fact U.S. forces rapidly counter-attacked and defeated the Viet Cong attacks.

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[28]Ibid., 14.
[29]Ibid., 219.

The lopsided coverage led Walter Cronkite, who could "reach as many people as the president yet with greater regularity,"[30] to report,

> It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate…to say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest that we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.[31]

To make matters worse, President Lyndon Johnson did not proactively engage the media after Tet. He did not articulate to Americans that by all estimates, the Tet offensive was a resounding defeat for the enemy. Instead, he hunkered down and adopted a "siege mentality, not making a public statement about Tet for two months,"[32] permitting both the press and his political opponents to fill the media vacuum and paint a picture of U.S. military defeat.

During this period, the television newscast came into its own and attracted greater audiences than the print media could ever hope for. Like today however, newscasts did best when conveying drama. Unfortunately, newscasters were not able to show both sides of the conflict. Reporters could not see the atrocities committed by the enemy because they did not have access to them.[33] Television news across America thus portrayed the Tet offensive in a confused manner with soldiers fighting a seemingly invisible enemy. When President Johnson finally spoke on March 31, 1968, he announced, among other things, that he would not run for election. The net effect of the distorted reporting of Tet coupled with the Johnson administration's unwillingness to talk to the nation in the wake of Tet convinced the media to report, "disaster in Vietnam."[34] Johnson's announcement not only signaled his own defeat, but also isolated the operational commander and further widened the credibility gap between the military and the media.

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[30]Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 43.
[31]Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 309.
[32]Ibid., Braestrup, xiii.
[33]Ibid., Kissinger, 43.
[34]Ibid., Braestrup, xi.

After Tet, reporters covered less of actual combat and more human-interest stories. Editors determined that the public was growing tired of war footage. This change in focus increased coverage of such negative issues as race relations and drug use. This reporting angle seemed both suspicious of the government and ignored the fact that most soldiers conducted themselves in an honorable manner. In response, some commanders decided against transporting reporters to combat areas, delayed the release of information and declined to conduct briefings in a timely manner. The meaningful give-and-take, which existed at the beginning of the war, disappeared.[35]

The credibility gap created between the operational commander, the president, the press and subsequently the people, permitted Hanoi to "accurately conclude that the war's center of gravity was American public opinion."[36] Real or illusory events reported by the press became more decisive than combat, the outcome of war determined not on the battlefield but on the pages of newspapers, magazines and most importantly on TV screens across America. The pressure created by the media, aggravated by an operational climate and a public relations system that did not fully appreciate the needs of the media and the effects that it could create made it difficult for politicians to continue the war.[37]

When examined using the evaluation criteria of access, logistical support and operational security considerations and context, the military's media engagement effectiveness during Vietnam presents contradictory results. The military permitted journalists unprecedented access to troops in combat. Americans could view combat on their television screens nightly and the information presented was only days old. Although not instantaneous like today's media coverage, coverage of Vietnam was groundbreaking. Logistically, the military supported the media. Often it was difficult for journalists to reach the field due to the number of modes of

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[35]Ibid., Hammond, 294-295.
[36]Ibid., Boot, 190.
[37]Brian Bond, *The Pursuit of Victory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 190.

travel that required synchronization, but the military made the effort to transport reporters where they wanted to go. Limitations on the amount of information provided through the daily briefings served the purpose of maintaining operational security. By acts of omission, the military withheld information that if made public could jeopardize operational security.

While the military effectively maintained operational security, albeit by not telling the whole story and provided the press with unprecedented access and logistics support, the military failed to provide journalists with the context the public needed to fully understand the military's actions. By not providing the press the necessary operational and political context to frame their reports, by the disjointed relationship between MACOI and JUSPAO, and by not understanding the fact that the press would conduct their own potentially damaging analysis, the military failed to engage the press effectively. By Tet, the severely damaged credibility of both MACV and the Administration hamstrung the military's capability to counter media reports that failed to see the larger operational picture and instead proclaimed a North Vietnamese victory.

Repercussions of the Military-Media Relationship and the Military-Media Cultural Divide

As American society slowly withdrew support to politicians and repudiated the Johnson and Nixon Administrations' Vietnam policies, and as an increasing number of politicians did the same, the military had to pick up the pieces of its broken self. It did so during the 1970s and 1980s—transforming its organization, equipment, and doctrine. Doubts about the abilities and motivations of politicians and the press nagged at senior officers and more junior career officers.[38] One eventual response was the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. It sought to ensure the military never found itself in the same type of conflict as it did in Vietnam. In summary, it sought to link the politicians' desire to use the military with the military's capability to prosecute

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[38]David H. Patreus, "Lessons of History and Lessons of Vietnam," in *Assessing the Vietnam War,* ed. Lloyd J. Matthews and Dale E. Brown (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1987), 174.

a war and American's support for the war. Despite the military's successful efforts to rebuild, however, the military still fixed its anger on the press, the most visible element of a society that appeared to have rejected them, and the element over which they had the least control. Starting with Tet, the military effectively drew itself into a shell in an attempt to minimize what it saw as the negative effect of the press.[39] In the end, Vietnam provided both high points and low points in the relationship between the military and the media. The military's refusal to censor the press as had been the norm in earlier conflicts served as a high; while service members' faulting the press for the war's loss combined with an increasingly editorializing press served as the low. Out of these lows, a growing cultural divide developed that impacted how each institution viewed and acted towards the other for the next three decades.

With the end of the draft in 1973, the cultural divide that separated the media from the military grew. No longer were citizens required to perform obligatory service. The large cross section of America, that at one time served and then went on to civilian lives and careers ceased to exist. "The end of the draft ensured that fewer and fewer members of America's elite—including its journalists—would have firsthand experience in the military."[40] The military culture that tended to attract more disciplined people continued to do so, while those would-be journalists rarely entered into military service. Peter Braestrup, a journalist in Vietnam and later Director of the Library of Congress, described the difference between the two cultures as both generational and gender-based caused by the end of the draft and the influx of women from the baby-boom generation into journalism.[41]

Over time, a culture gap developed along economic and social lines. The military draws largely from the mass of citizens that tend to have a nationalistic mindset while journalists largely come from the cosmopolitan elite. If it seems like the media have more in common with the non-

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[39]Ibid., Hammond, 296.
[40]James Kitfield, "The Pen and the Sword," *Government Executive*, April 2000, 18. Available from http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?; Internet; accessed 29 October 2004.
[41]Ibid., Aukofer, 98.

governmental organizations that the military typically has difficulty working with, it is because

they do--the members of each group come from the same socio-economic, education background.

The military, however, comes from middle-working class America.[42]

These demographic cultural differences manifest themselves into distinct cognitive

models, too. As the military developed a healthy disrespect for the press, the press developed an

increasingly skeptical and iconoclastic self-image. Concerning not only Vietnam, but also the

Watergate scandal, the media increasingly fashioned its own societal role as "speaking the

uncomfortable truth to entrenched power--inclined to challenge and often to distrust authority--

questioning everything and everyone."[43] Meanwhile, the military grew increasingly conservative

relative to the remainder of the country.

> What stands out about military officers is that almost alone among the ruling elites in
> business, law and government, they retain a socially conservative core belief system. The
> two professions have attracted Americans of vastly different natures and perspectives.
> Joe Galloway jokingly referred to the natural tension between the groups as a struggle
> between the 'anarchists and the control freaks.'[44]

In the field, this cultural difference translates into a journalist's willingness to question policy and

discuss the subtle nuances and abstractions of that policy while the soldier desires concrete

explanations and directed orders.[45] Over time, a misunderstanding between the two cultures,

thrust together in the execution of their professions grew, the repercussions of which would

reverberate through Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, Operation Just Cause in Panama,

Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait and Iraq, and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq.

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[42]Robert D. Kaplan, "The Military and the Media," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 2004, 38.
Available from http://ebird.afis.osd.mil/ebfiles/s20041005326084.html; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004

[43]David Shaw, "Media Still Wait To Be Called Up," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 2001.
Available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2001/e20011101mediastill.htm; Internet; accessed 1 November
2001.

[44]Ibid., Kitfield, 18.

[45]Ibid., Kaplan, 38.

Urgent Fury to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF): The Military-Media Relationship Pendulum

To examine the military-media relationship between Vietnam and the present, this paper not only discusses Vietnam but also focuses on the military operations of Urgent Fury (Grenada), Just Cause (Panama), Desert Storm (the Persian Gulf War) and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The criterion of access, logistical support, operational security and context provide a lens through which to observe how well the military conducted its media relations. Each operation, relative to its time, focused on ground offensive action and resulted either in a media policy change or at least a shift in attitudes that affected the military-media relationship.

Urgent Fury (Grenada)

On October 25, 1983, the Caribbean nation of Grenada emerged as the location of the latest Cold War crisis. Grenada, largely unknown by Americans, had undergone a revolution overturning an elected president and turned to the east for economic aid. This in and of itself was not enough for the United States to take a particularly keen interest in the country, but U.S. political and military leadership became threatened when it started to build an airport with the assistance of Cuban workers. The United States viewed the airport as a potential Soviet or Cuban air base, which was a violation of U.S. Western Hemisphere foreign policy. After internal disputes led to the assassination of the non-elected ruler of Grenada, the United States took the opportunity to protect its citizens on the island and launched Operation Urgent Fury.[46]

The captains and majors of the armed forces that served in Vietnam were by 1983, the senior officers that led the U.S. invasion of Grenada. As the first major military action after Vietnam, politicians and the military were eager to avoid another Vietnam in regards to its

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[46]Jennifer Ann Verdecchia, "Grenada: Pawn or Casualty of the Cold War?" (Duquesne University, 1994), 3.

relationship with the media.[47] Senior military leaders operated under the assumption that they

had more to lose than to gain if they interacted with the media. Consequently, the military mostly

excluded its public affairs officers from the planning and as a result, they were unable to shape

the media's coverage of military operations.[48] The eagerness to limit the potential of bad news

coming from Grenada however led to the lowest point in the evolution of the military's

relationship with the media post-Vietnam.

Buoyed by Great Britain's strict press limitations, which effectively curtailed negative

reports during the Falklands War, the U.S. military felt justified in what would become a virtual

press blackout of the invasion of Grenada. While journalists had traditionally accompanied U.S.

military forces into combat, reporters, because of a "concern for operational security and for their

own safety,"[49] were not permitted to go to the island until the second day after the invasion.

Even then, the military allowed only 15 of the 600 reporters[50] that had made it as far as Barbados

to set foot on the island a day after the attack and allowed only 24 more the next day.[51] Those

reporters that attempted to go to the island without military permission met with unprecedented

military actions and potential incarceration, all designed to prohibit eyewitness coverage of the

action.

The U.S. Navy, under the direction of the Operational Commander, Rear Admiral Joseph

Metcalf III, effectively quarantined the island from journalist's sight. In one instance, an ABC

Television news crew chartered a boat in Barbados and set out for Grenada. Prior to reaching the

island, however, a Navy aircraft intercepted them and dropped a buoy with a note attached

directing them to return to Barbados. When at first the boat continued on its course, journalists

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[47]Marc D. Felman, LTC, U.S. Air Force, "The Military/Media Clash and the New Principle of War: Media Spin," (School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1993), 14.
        [48]Ibid., Aukofer, 44.
        [49]Ibid., Verdecchia, 86.
        [50]Ibid., Aukofer, 44.
        [51]Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada: Revolution, Invasion and Aftermath* (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1984), 203.

described that the aircraft made a mock strafing pass over the boat. After that, the journalists turned back.[52] When asked what would have happened had the boat not turned around, Admiral Metcalf responded, "We would have blown your ass right out of the water."[53] He further reminded the press that they were not to act independently by recounting the story stating, "Any of you guys coming in on press boats? Well, I know how to stop those press boats. We've been shooting at them. We haven't sunk any yet, but who are we to know who's on them?" In remarks the same day about the admiral's statement and the news black out in general, Mark Catto, a former Pentagon press officer, stated, "Unhappily, the average joint chief of staff member has all the public relations sense of Attila the Hun."[54] It was clear that those who ordered the news blackout had in mind the fact that the war in Vietnam had been a public relations failure.[55] In this operation however, the combatant commander decided that restricting access best curbed poor news coverage and consequently, the potential requirement of having to support the press.

The restricted access had the immediate impact of not just an interpretation given to the events but on the recounting of what in fact happened. *Newsweek* published inaccurate reports about some of the combat, having received all of their information from the administration.[56] Pentagon estimates grossly exaggerated the number of Cubans on the island and under exaggerated the number of U.S. soldiers and Marines used in the operation.[57] The first detailed briefings given by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), GEN John W. Vessey, Jr., two days after the invasion, showed footage only taken by military cameramen. By not allowing information on military activity to be known by the American people and by only showing the

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[52]Ibid.
[53]Ibid., Kitfield, 18.
[54]Ibid., O'Shaughnessy, 210.
[55]Ibid., 203.
[56]Ibid., 212.
[57]Ibid., 204. U.S. authorities reported that there were 1,600 Cubans on the island when in reality there turned out to be 784 and U.S. sources said it would take 3,000 Marines and soldiers when in fact the number had risen to 6,000.

public what it wanted shown, the administration ensured popular support—the people's minds

had been effectively made up for them as to whether or not they supported the Administration.[58]

In the case of Grenada, context never became an issue because of the quickness of the operation

and the news blackout that concealed the operation from the inquisitive eyes of the media.

Curiously, the public did not seem to mind the relative dearth of information regarding

the invasion. A poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* reported that fifty-two percent of the

public supported the administration's news blackout while forty-one percent disapproved and

seven percent were uncertain. Interestingly though, the poll also reflected that Americans would

be opposed to the possibility of future news blackouts by a margin of two to one. Americans

believed that journalists who accompanied combat troops provided a necessary service.[59]

Perhaps one can best understand Americans' acceptance of the media blackout through the lens of

the day. Only two days prior to the invasion of Grenada, terrorists attacked U.S. Marines in their

barracks in Lebanon, killing 241. Much of the public saw the invasion of Grenada, viewed

through the lens of the Marines barracks bombing, as America standing up for itself.

When the military finally permitted the media to report on the events in Grenada, what

they had to report was generally positive. Importantly though, the press did highlight the inability

of the Army and the Navy to effectively communicate with each other. The now infamous story

of the 82nd paratroop officer who, trying to coordinate fire support, used his telephone credit card

to contact Fort Bragg because he could not communicate with the Navy ships offshore publicly

demonstrated the inadequacy of Joint communications. The military also revealed its inadequacy

with Joint interoperability procedures when Army helicopters transporting wounded troops were

denied permission to land on the carrier Independence because the pilots had not been qualified

by the Navy for carrier landings. After finally receiving permission to land and offload the

wounded, the Navy initially refused to refuel them because funding compensation procedures had

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[58]Ibid., Verdecchia, 87.
[59]Ibid., 90.

not been solved.[60] If reporters had not highlighted the full story of the problems between the services, the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which proved to strengthen the military, might not have passed.[61]

While journalists had accompanied the armed forces into combat since the Mexican War in 1846, Operation Urgent Fury took the military-media relationship to a new low. After the operation, the military realized this and General Vessey convened the Sidle Commission, chaired by Major General Winant Sidle (formerly the head of MACOI in Vietnam). The major outcome of the commission was the establishment of a national media pool (See Appendix B). The military would send a standing pool, representing the top media outlets in the country, to the operation and share its reports with other news organizations—abiding by military dictated security concerns. The pool would not be long-standing and once news organizations could operate independently, they would. The intent of the pool was to provide the American people with an independent view of ongoing military actions as early as possible in the operation.[62]

On paper, the national media pool appeared to smooth the relationship between the military and the media but in practice, as the invasion of Panama would prove, it did not work as intended. In reality, it only further separated the media from the people it wanted to cover. By creating a media pool designed to act automatically, operational commanders further distanced themselves from the need to plan for the media.[63] The next military operation in Panama illustrated this problem.

When examined through the lens of the evaluation criteria, the military-media relationship virtually ceased to exist during Operation Urgent Fury. The Grenada operation

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[60]Greg H. Parlier, MAJ, U.S. Army, "The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986: Resurgence in Defense Reform and the Legacy of Eisenhower," (Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1989). Available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1989/index.html; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

[61]Ibid., Kitfield.

[62]Ibid., Aukofer, 44.

[63]Ibid.

proved to be a good example of how not to engage the media. The military only provided access to Grenada days after the attack occurred—and then only to a relatively low number of reporters. As such, the military provided logistic support after the fact. The nature of the operation virtually precluded explanation of operational context. For the American people, the halting of communist expansion in the Western Hemisphere and the rescuing of American citizens in Grenada provided context enough with which to judge the operation as being necessary. Finally, there was no balance between operational security and allowing media coverage of the attack. In contrast to today's large-scale military operations, Grenada was not open for public debate.

Just Cause (Panama)

From the mid-1980s to 1989, U.S. administrations grew increasingly concerned about the actions of the Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. Indicted for his participation in drug trafficking, arms trading and money laundering, Noriega had become a menace not only to Central America but to international trade. In response, the United States launched Operation Just Cause in order to neutralize the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) and remove Noriega from power.[64]

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney discussed the media during planning for the invasion with both President George H.W. Bush and Vice President Dan Quayle. After briefing the President prior to launching forces, attention turned to, among other things, addressing the media and how the public might view the upcoming military action. Bob Woodward noted,

> Once satisfied that six questions could be answered positively, namely that there was sufficient provocation, the operation would solve the problem, the PDF was out of control, minimum casualties and damage were likely, the plan would bring democracy to Panama, and finally, public and press reaction would most likely be positive, CJCS Colin Powell gave the final command to go.[65]

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[64]Bruce W. Watson and Peter G. Tsouras, *Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Intervention in Panama* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 3-14.
[65]Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 171.

Not much changed in regards to the relationship between the military and the media between the invasion of Grenada and the invasion of Panama. The military used the national media pool established as an outcome of the Sidle Panel recommendations. Southern Command promoted the use of a press pool made up of reporters already in Panama and therefore more familiar with the country while the Pentagon, led by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, favored a pool comprised of what was thought to be more seasoned Washington, D.C. reporters.[66]

The week prior to the invasion both President Bush and Vice President Quayle told Cheney that they doubted the press could maintain operational security and left the final call as to how to handle the media to him. He called out the national media pool only hours before the operation was to commence.[67] Due to the late notification, Southern Command had made only minimal plans to support the pool, none of which included sending reporters out to accompany units in action. "When Air Force Colonel Ronald Sconyers permitted NBC to land one charter airplane of reporters at Howard Air Force Base, he anticipated a small puddle-jumper with a handful of reporters. What he got instead was a wide-body L1011 jet packed with hundreds of television and print journalists."[68] The military escorted the journalists to locations throughout Panama where combat had taken place. When not escorting the press to various locations, the military sequestered the press at Howard Air Force Base, ostensibly for their own safety, where they received briefings from State Department staffers, on topics that had already appeared on CNN. Finally, those reporters that did not participate in the pool scooped those that did

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[66]Barry E. Venable, "The Army and the Media," *Military Review*, (January/February 2002). Available from http://leavenworth.army.mil/milrev/English/JanFeb02/venable.htm#MainBody; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

[67]Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988 – January 1990* (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 47.

[68]Thomas Donnelly et al., eds., *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 411.

participate in the pool as the media center at Howard Air Force Base was ill equipped for reporters to file their stories in a timely manner.[69]

Once again, the military felt compelled to examine the procedures and principles for handling the media. In response to the outcry from news organizations, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Pete Williams, asked Fred S. Hoffman, a former Associated Press reporter and Department of Defense deputy press spokesperson, to examine media coverage of Operation Just Cause. In his examination, Hoffman discovered that public affairs personnel had not been involved in the operational planning.[70]

The report that Hoffman filed suggested numerous ways by which the military could improve its relations with the media. Most notably, it recommended the inclusion of public affairs personnel during the planning phases of an operation. Further emphasizing the point, CJCS Powell issued a message to all major military commands that suggested that media relations were important enough to warrant the commander's personal attention.[71] It also stated that media coverage and pool support must be planned in conjunction with operational plans and should address "all aspects of operational activity…and that public affairs annex should receive command attention when formulating and reviewing all such plans."[72]

In the end, both the military and the press considered coverage of Panama a failure; the press because of severely constrained access and poor logistics support and senior military leadership because of the lack of planning for the media. The military only instituted those Sidle Panel recommendations that tended to restrict the press, namely the permanent media pool. Since pool reporters did not have the ability to witness the fighting, the pool hamstrung those organizations that went along with the Pentagon's plan, while those news organizations not

[69]Gary P. Bruner, "Military-Media Relations in Recent U.S. Operations," (U.S. Army Management Staff College, 1997). Available from http://amscportal.belvoir.army.mil/articles/97-3/articles.htm; Internet; accessed 9 Nov 2004.
[70]Ibid., Venable.
[71]Ibid.
[72]Ibid.

participating in the pool still managed to send reporters to Panama. Moreover, those reporters not

sequestered on Howard Air Force Base had the ability to report faster than those in the pool,

confined to the limited resources at the base.[73] Due to the short duration of the conflict and the

fact that political leadership had long voiced its desire, which the public largely supported, to

remove Noriega, operational and strategic context did not emerge as a relevant consideration for

commanders or public affairs personnel to address. Finally, just as it had in Grenada, the military

failed to balance operational security with the media's desire to report—coming down heavily on

the side of security. Only a year later, with the launch of Operations Desert Storm however, it

appeared that the military leadership had learned its lessons in engaging the media. In what

would develop into the most persistent news coverage of any military operation ever, the military

would start to shake off the misgivings it had with the press because of Vietnam.

Operation Desert Storm (Iraq)

> The Persian Gulf was the media's Cannae, and the press played Varro to Schwarzkopf's
> Hannibal.
>> Howell Raines
>> *New York Times*[74]

      While the American public and military were happy with media coverage of the Persian

Gulf War, the media were not. The Persian Gulf War became the first "real-time" war and the

Pentagon had anticipated it. After learning its lessons of not preparing for the media in Grenada

and Panama, the Pentagon aggressively sought to control the media during the Persian Gulf War.

Prior to Operation Desert Storm, Pentagon planners worked with the media to develop a working

relationship that would make coverage as good as possible. During initial planning, the military

intended to institute a system whereby reporters would go to the field with units for the duration

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[73]Brendan R. McLane, "Reporting from the Sandstorm: An Appraisal of Embedding,"
Parameters, (Spring 2004), 77.

[74]Howell Raines in "The Changing Face of Battlefield Reporting," ed. Richard H. Sinnreich, *Army Magazine*, November 1994, 30.

and report independently. "We just didn't go for it though,"[75] said Pete Williams, former

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Lingering attitudes that had become prevalent

in some in the top ranks of the military prevented the coverage from being as good as it could

have been.[76]

The military only partially followed the recommendations of the Sidle Panel in regards to

the establishment and execution of a national media pool. Specifically, the military planned for

accommodating the media but then went about establishing a strict pool system. Like Panama, in

the Persian Gulf, the pool became permanent--the military citing logistics, safety and operational

security issues as reasons for maintaining it. Additionally, the military established an

accreditation system and managed journalists through a Joint Information Bureau (JIB). This in

and of itself was not a new concept. What was new, however, was the degree to which life for

journalists revolved around the JIB. The JIB briefings became the conduit through which the

military supplied its information and the location where the media ceased to present balanced

news and became the cheerleader for the war effort.[77]

The JIB assigned those journalists that wanted access to units to small pools escorted by

public affairs officers. In total, there were 25 pools made up of five reporters and one public

affairs officer touring the country at any given time.[78] Since over 1,000 journalists traveled to the

theater though, the rest either waited at the JIB for something to happen or stayed in their hotel.

This exclusion of the media from access to anything but the pools or the briefing area at the JIB

lead to a "form of censorship – banning the press from the war zone in a modified manner" and

consequently the military's message, with the exception of independent reporting coming from

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[75]Ibid., Aukofer, 170.

[76]Ibid., Aukofer, 45.

[77]Everette E. Dennis et al., eds., *The Media at War: The Press and the Persian Gulf Conflict* (New York: Gannett Foundation Program, 1991), xi.

[78]Barry E. Venable, "The Army and the Media," *Military Review*, (January/February 2002). Available from http://leavenworth.army.mil/milrev/English/JanFeb02/venable.htm#MainBody; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

CNN in Baghdad, were largely the only stories to get out.[79] The lack of access to both people

and places by the media ensured correspondents could not gather news other than that provided

by the military. Like Panama, the public only heard one side of the story.

Additionally, the military held a virtual monopoly on communications capabilities

required by news organizations to broadcast their stories back to their stations in the United

States. This further guaranteed that the military and CNN dominated the vast majority of

coverage from in-theater.[80] General Schwarzkopf limited that portion of military briefings that

could be televised to 30 minutes. He permitted the press to ask more detailed questions once the

cameras were off, but answers were off-the-record.[81] During the initial phase of the ground

assault, the military established a 48-hour news blackout for pool reporters. Prior to airing, the

military required the press to send its news footage to Riyadh or Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for

potential censorship. After 12 hours, the military relaxed the blackout as the success of the

assault became apparent, citing however that the blackout was impractical.[82] The military was

perfectly fine with this format. During the Persian Gulf War, "It seemed that the military public

affairs operation went to war in the Persian Gulf not just against Saddam Hussein but also against

the Saigon Press corps of 1972."[83] The military sought to avoid the problems of Vietnam

reporting – tightly controlling reporter's coverage and how quickly they broadcasted their stories

to the world.

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[79]Ibid., Dennis, xi.
[80]Tyrone M. Woodyard, LTC, U.S. Air Force, "Embedded Media: Framing Media Coverage During Operation Iraqi Freedom," (Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, AY 2003-2004). Available from http://www.ndu.edu/icaf/srwp/04papers; Internet; accessed 20 November 2004.
[81]Caspar Henderson, "The Filtered War," in *The Media and the Gulf War*, ed. by Hedrick Smith (Foreign Policy Institute of the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1992), 118.
[82]Howard Kurtz, "U.S. Lets Some News Filter Through 'Blackout'," in *The Media and the Gulf War*, ed. by Hedrick Smith (Foreign Policy Institute of the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1992), 158.
[83]Richard H. Seinnreich, "The Changing Face of Battlefield Reporting," *Army Magazine*, November 1994, 30.

The control the military exercised over the media highlighted the importance of global instant communications. In this war, the media, particularly television, was not the enemy but the battlefield. The "CNN effect"—the notion of a causality effect between what was reported on live television and what the enemy might do because of those reports was recognized by both the Allied forces and Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein talked through the media, trying to project himself as a symbol of power to the Arab world yet trying to assure the West of his benevolence by hugging children on television. The Allies also used the media as a conduit to talk directly to Saddam and the Iraqi military—demonstrating the effectiveness of its military technological power with live video feeds of bombs destroying their targets.

Still, the military's control of the media sometimes did not benefit the military as much as it hoped. Because the military did not allow complete access to the troops, senior leaders realized that they had lost an opportunity to show case units' achievements. Only the Marines, which handled the media more carefully and allowed for greater access, realized the opportunity that came with greater access. Not only were their units highlighted, improving unit morale, but journalists left the experience with a greater respect and understanding of the Marine Corps.[84] The Marines sacrificed the potential for security issues in return for long-term trust and understanding—a bridging the divide between different cultures.

Other problems emerged for the military due to its reporting restrictions, namely, truth. During briefings from the JIB, the military highlighted its technological prowess by showing guided munitions hitting their targets. The Air Force reported an 80 percent success rate on bombing missions against Scud missiles. However, in briefings to the House Armed Services Committee after the war, the public learned that only nine percent of the bombs were guided and

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[84]Barry E. Willey, COL, U.S. Army, "The Military Media Connection: For Better of For Worse," *Military Review*, (December 1998 – February 1999): 14.

for every bomb that hit its target, there were between 70 and 75 misses.[85] In this instance, the military appeared to have grossly exaggerated the claims it made to the press and likewise, in order to report the story, the press tacitly published unverifiable information. Additionally, a security review system presented commanders the opportunity to slow reporting and in some cases, abused the system altogether.[86]

By restricting media access, and not allowing journalists to investigate and form their own stories, the military runs the risk of creating a credibility gap, from which, once created, it is hard to recover. The military certainly planned to handle the media. Support to reporters ensured however that the military got what it wanted. Operational security, cited as the main reason to restrict reporting once again, dominated coverage. So much so that the public did not know what it was missing until after the war.

The effect of the Persian Gulf War on the military-media relationship pendulum was an improvement for the military. While the media claimed the military had unduly stifled it with overly restrictive press rules, the American public viewed the military's restraint of the press with favor and viewed the American press' coverage of the war favorably as well.[87] Still, the media clamored for greater access. Negotiating a way ahead, in April 1992, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and Pete Williams, then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and Washington bureau chiefs of the major newspapers and television networks completed the development of the "Nine Principles for News Media Coverage of DOD Operations" (See Appendix A). In broad terms, the principles highlighted the need for the military to permit the press access to units, to provide logistical support to the press and to allow the press to report independently.

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[85]David Shaw, "Media Still Wait To Be Called Up," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 2001. Available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2001/e20011101mediastill.htm; Internet; accessed 1 November 2001.
[86]Ibid., Aukofer, 171.
[87]Ibid., Dennis, xii.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq)

When the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) entered into its most controversial phase, the pre-emptive attack on Iraq, senior public affairs personnel in the Pentagon realized that this war required a public affairs plan just as daring and controversial as the war it would support. Instead of sequestering hundreds of journalists at a JIB and providing tours of the front, as they had done during the first Persian Gulf War, the Pentagon would embed reporters with combat units. The notion of reporters spending time with combat units in the field was not new. After all, embedding had enabled reporters to cover the action in Vietnam, and this is why the embed program was controversial. What was new about this embedding was that never before had reporters had access to frontline soldiers and leaders and the technology to instantly transmit stories and video around the world.

By abandoning the tightly controlled media pools favored by the military, thought to be of enormous success during the Persian Gulf War, public affairs planners recognized the difference between Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and seized the initiative in the public relations campaign to support OIF. In 1991, the world recognized U.S. forces as the "good guys," not so in 2003. Stephen Hess and Marvin Kalb of the Brookings Institution commented that, "World opinion was hostile and certainly would have been skeptical of information that came through the U.S. government."[88] Instead, the Pentagon would allow the media to become its messenger.

Victoria Clark, the Pentagon spokesperson and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, presented the embed program to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld, who agreed that a free press might be the most effective method to counter Saddam Hussein's propaganda, suggested the embed program to the President and Vice President—both of which

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[88]Stephen Hess and Marvin Kalb, ed. *The Media and the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 12.

thought reporters might either purposefully or inadvertently reveal sensitive information. Despite

their misgivings, Rumsfeld personally approved the embed program and stressed its importance

to operational commanders, who Clarke was concerned would not provide enough attention to the

program without Rumsfeld's backing.[89]

The embed program had five goals: (1) Build and maintain American public support for

U.S. policy in Iraq; (2) Counter Iraqi propaganda; (3) Generate and maintain international

support; (4) Achieve information dominance early; and, (5) Demonstrate the professionalism of

the U.S. military.[90] In order to accomplish these goals, the Pentagon sought to include in the

program journalists from international, national, regional and local organizations representing

every medium.

The Pentagon's public affairs offensive did not limit itself to the embed program.

Backing the embeds, the Pentagon held daily briefings in coordination with Central Command

briefings, actively liaised with retired general officers contracted to the networks as military

consultants and established a public affairs rapid reaction team designed to respond to press

inquiries. With such emphasis placed on staying attuned to the media, the Secretary of Defense

and his Assistant for Public Affairs had decided that the media was the center of gravity for

maintaining strong public support for the war.[91]

To address potential operational security issues and prepare for the embed program,

Clarke vetted each journalist and news organization that expressed interest in participating in the

program. Ground rules relating to the conduct of both reporters and the military personnel around

them established the basic principle that journalists had complete access to military operations.

In cases where the broadcast of a news reports might harm a military operation, the military

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[89]Ibid., Woodyard.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Ibid.

instructed reporters to delay the report until forces were out of harm's way.[92] News organizations

that chose to participate in the embed program received complete logistical support for their

reporters. Those that chose to cover the war independently had to support themselves.

To assist reporters, most of whom had no military experience, the military established

weeklong media boot camps, teaching basic combat survival skills, first aid, nuclear, biological

and chemical survival training, tent building and basic marksmanship.[93] Boot camp not only

benefited the individual reporter but also began the process of bridging the cultural gap between

soldier and reporter. Boot camp provided reporters and soldiers an opportunity to interact and

gain a greater understanding of each other's profession. In particular, journalists gained exposure

to the rigors of being a soldier. Andrew Jacobs of the *New York Times* described his experience

as "alternately enlightening, entertaining, horrifying, and physically exhausting."[94] Instead of

relying on a system that attempted to censor journalists after the fact, vetting journalists,

combined with a new found empathy for soldiers due to shared experiences effectively produced

an acceptable measure of security.

With the implementation of the embed program, the Pentagon had taken a huge step

forward and the program largely served its purpose of gaining and maintaining public support.

To a nation infatuated with reality TV, the Pentagon found a format that mesmerized the country.

Of the more than 700 reporters that participated in the program, it should not come as a surprise

that the largest networks, those with the largest viewerships, had the choicest assigned units.[95]

David Bloom of NBC, reported live from his "Bloom-Mobile" day and night to the two most

widely watched morning and evening news programs in the country as the 3d Infantry Division

raced northward toward Baghdad. After holding the media at arm's length, starting with the Tet

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[92]Ibid., Woodyard.
[93]Ibid., McLane, 82.
[94]Andrew Jacobs, "My Week at Embed Boot Camp," *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 3 February 2003, 34-35.
[95]Ibid., Woodyard.

offensive, the military finally appeared to accept that the media could be a force multiplier.

Commanders realized that they had limited themselves with the restrictive measures of the

Persian Gulf War. They now realized that the media helped show case their units' achievements,

boost morale, and support the democratic ideals of the country, while providing instant, credible

news to a public that stayed glued to the progress of their military. Additionally, embedded

media effectively countered Iraqi propaganda.[96] When Iraqi Information Minister Muhammad

Saeed al-Sahhaf appeared on television and declared that U.S. forces had not entered Baghdad,

most major networks split their screens and conducted live broadcasts from their embedded

reporters riding on vehicles entering Baghdad.

Despite the success of the embed program, it did have its problems as well. The two

most common complaints were a concern that reporters could not be objective in their reporting

and that a journalist's reporting would be akin to looking at the war through a soda straw.

Because of the insular nature of being embedded, reporters lacked broader perspective and hence

the ability to frame their reports in a broader context. Jim Dwyer of the *New York Times*

considered the potential for lack of objectivity a "professionally treacherous situation…you are

sleeping next to the people you are covering and your survival is based on them."[97] The notion of

a reporter falling victim to a "Stockholm Syndrome"[98] type of reporting was overblown however.

The Columbia University's Project for Excellence in Journalism actually found that 94% of

embed stories were entirely factual.[99]

The notion that reporters could and should only report what they saw was important to

Chris Cramer, the managing director of CNN International. He stated that, "We tried very hard to

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[96]Ibid.

[97]Terence Smith, "The Real-Time War: Defining News In The Middle East," *Columbia Journalism Review*, (May/June 2003). Available from http://www.cjr.org/issues/2003/3/standard-smith.asp; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

[98]Describes the behavior of kidnap victims who, over time, become sympathetic to their captors. The name derives from a 1973 hostage incident in Stockholm, Sweden. At the end of six days of captivity in a bank, several kidnap victims actually resisted rescue attempts, and afterwards refused to testify against their captors.

[99]Ibid., Woodyard.

not have embeds make assessments beyond their horizon"[100] because of the potential for stories

to be filed and commented on in a manner out of context with the true operational reality. Indeed,

the constant filing of stories by embeds and the relatively perfunctory analysis provided by

network consultants often painted the wrong picture for the viewing public and politicians. One

of the first and most reported examples of taking events out of context befell Lieutenant General

William Wallace, Fifth Corps Commander. Wallace commented that "the enemy we're fighting

is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against."[101] The reporter that asked the question

realized that "he was just voicing the frustration and the anxiety that he was feeling at the time

out there."[102] Had there been no embedded reporter, that comment would never have found its

way on to the nation's nightly news programs or been blown out of proportion by the Pentagon.

Embedding posed the unique problem of instantaneously converting statements made or actions

committed by soldiers on the front lines into questions posed by journalists in briefing rooms at

the Pentagon and elsewhere.

Just as the military and the media seemed to be working well together, largely because of

the military's proactive engagement of the media, the President declared major combat operations

over and embedded reporters started to go home. With this, reporting started to become eerily

similar to post-Tet reporting during Vietnam. Peter Braestrup commented that after Tet,

"Destruction was the story; recovery was not."[103] As the recovery of Iraq slipped into an

insurgency and the battle transitioned into a fight for the "hearts and minds" of Iraqis, the newly

established Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) allowed a vacuum of information to exist and

slowly the insurgents' message started to fall on receptive ears. The CPA should have flooded

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[100]Tim Burt, "When Reporters Go Into Battle," *London Financial Times*, 14 September 2004. Available from http://ebird.afis.osd.mil/cgi-bin/ebird/displaydata.pl?Requested=/ebfiles; Internet; accessed 19 September 2004.

[101]Ban Balz and Mike Allen, "CEO Bush Takes Over Management of the Message," *The Washington Post*, 28 March 2003, sec. A, p. 34.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Ibid., Braestrup, 180.

the airwaves detailing the coalition's rebuilding and governing plans.[104] As the insurgency grew,

the nature of the conflict became more information-centric with maneuver warfare in support.

The importance of the military providing operational context for the public to better understand

the confusing events of an insurgency became more important than during the drive to Baghdad.

Yet at the same time, the very people the military wanted to leverage in order to disseminate its

story were leaving the country. In fact, while over 700 journalists participated in the embed

program during the assault on Baghdad, only 23 embedded reporters remained in Iraq as of July

9, 2003.[105]

As a result of the threat posed by insurgents to journalists, embedding became the only

safe way to cover Iraq during the insurgency. As a result, the lead story is typically about

insurgent warfare rather than recovery efforts. Images of Americans fighting insurgent Iraqis

have had the negative effect of portraying Americans as occupiers. When embedded journalists

videotaped a Marine in Fallujah shooting an apparently unarmed Iraqi, the shooting had the effect

of furthering some Iraqi's notions of Americans as occupiers. The videotaped shooting made

headlines around the world. Senior leaders had to grapple with tactical events creating strategic

implications—calling into question, for some, the very nature of America's role in Iraq and

posing the question of whether or not the embed program has helped or hindered the military.

During the post-hostility phase (Phase IV) of OIF, the access provided to reporters more

often than not resulted in coverage that is factual but not always helpful to America's cause.

Scenes of the assault on Fullajah combined with daily reports of American casualties and calls for

more troops made it difficult for the military to provide an operational context that speaks of

favorable progress to the American public. Further, incidents of abuses of power such as the

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[104]Shane Harris, "Krohn's Rules," *Government Executive*, 15 September 2004, 52. Available from http://ebird.afis.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20040924323391.html; Internet; accessed 24 September 2004.
        [105]Joe Strupp "Only 23 Embedded Reporters Left in Iraq," *Editor & Publisher*. 9 July 2003. Available from http://www.editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/headlines/article_display.jsp; Internet; accessed 23 October 2004.

Abu-Ghraib prison scandal erode military and political credibility. As a result of instantaneous reporting, it has become difficult for the military to provide the context with which the public might best understand ongoing operations in Iraq. Recent scenes from Iraq have, in fact, lead to Americans' increased skepticism about the potential for success in Iraq. "An Associated Press poll conducted December 6-8, 2004 found that fewer than half of respondents, 47 percent, thought it likely Iraq will be able to establish a stable government while that number was 55 percent in April, 2004."[106]

In the future, the Department of Defense will most likely consider conducting an embedded reporter program on a case-by-case basis. During major combat operations, where no force could credibly challenge U.S forces, embedded reporters were a win for the public, the media and the military.[107] During major combat operations, the media conveyed in a credible manner, four of the five points the Pentagon set forth as goals. While the military extended the invitation to embed to foreign media, it could not generate and maintain international support. Regardless, embedded reporters, supported completely by the military, effectively conveyed the pride, dedication and ferocity of the service members that fought and are still fighting in OIF. Certainly, the media expects that the embed program is here to stay. Once granted unprecedented access to the military, it would be hard to imagine the media not clamoring for the same access during future conflicts. The military however, has to weigh the amount of access it provides the media, particularly as it balances the risks and rewards inherent in unconventional and conventional warfare.

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[106]Will Lester, "AP Survey Finds Public Doubts Growing in Iraq," *Editor&Publisher*. 11 December 2004. Available from http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/search/search_results_taxo.jsp; Internet; Accessed 11 December 2004.
[107]Alan Pergament, "Assessing the Media's Battle Plan for Coverage," *Buffalo News*, 18 April 2003.

Towards a More Productive Military - Media Relationship

Regardless of how the military allows journalists to cover and report military operations, technology and the public's insatiable appetite for information, indicated by the sheer number of news outlets, has altered the military-media relationship. The 24-hour news cycle has created a tension between being quick and accurate, resulting in a "perpetually unfinished product."[108] Embedding, combined with technology, altered the news landscape and gave the media the ability to shape the battlefield and perception of viewers around the world on a real-time basis. George Will observed that, "Today's problem is context. Up-close combat engagements almost always look confusing and awful because they are."[109] Even Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld noted that, "Reports can seem somewhat disorienting."[110] It is the military's responsibility therefore to make military operations less disorienting and provide a greater degree of context so that both political leadership and the American public better understand operations. Once the military has established the policy and ground rules of how the media can cover an operation, the military must still consider how it intends to interact with the media on a day-to-day basis.

An Argument Against Engagement

The pendulum of the military-media relationship has swung widely since the Vietnam War. Clearly evidenced in OIF, the military-media relationship is better for both the military and the media today. By cooperating, understanding the unique cultures of both and developing realistic approaches to meet each other's needs, the military and the media have both benefited.

Prior to OIF, the military determined that both institutions could benefit from better engagement, realizing "Warrior and reporter are complementary arms of our nation's war-

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[108]David Shaw, "Media Still Wait To Be Called Up," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 2001. Available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2001/e20011101mediastill.htm; Internet; accessed 1 November 2001.

[109]Paul Friedman, "The Real-Time War: TV: A Missed Opportunity," *Columbia Journalism Review*, (May/June 2003). Available from http://www.cjr.org/issues/2003/3/tv-friedman.asp; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

[110]Ibid., Smith.

fighting resources."[111] While the media also benefited from the unprecedented access, some in

the media questioned whether the Pentagon was overly influential regarding OIF coverage.

Public affairs leadership expertly engaged the media, forcing the media to question itself while at

the same time fully realizing the Pentagon was providing unprecedented and unexpected support -

- forcing media pundits to realize that while the onus of effective media engagement falls largely

on the military, the press bears a large part of the burden of writing the story correctly.

As much as it is a responsibility of the military to provide information to the press, there

are those who believe the military should hold the press at arms length because of their inability

to always cover stories correctly. In fact, much of the American public believes the media

routinely reports facts incorrectly. A 2001 Pew poll found that Americans think the press

incorrectly reports facts, and half of those surveyed thought the government should regulate

reporting in time of war.[112] Some in the press criticize their own "inadequacies in training and

organization"[113] for this. Critics point to breaches or potential breaches in security. Geraldo

Rivera's disclosure on television of a 101st Airborne Division's upcoming attack during OIF and

the potential that the press disseminates communiqués to Al Qaeda agents each time it broadcasts

a terrorist's tape, serve as a vivid reminder of the press's potential to aid the enemy. Finally, the

military is not legally obligated to provide reporters access to combat zones. On October 5, 2004,

the Supreme Court declined to decide whether the military had a constitutional obligation to

provide access to troops in combat. In so doing, it upheld a Court of Appeals ruling siding with

the military in its argument that it did not have to provide access. While these arguments are

valid, they do not counter the enormous benefit the military and the nation derive from a free

press allowed to cover military operations. For democracy to work, it demands an educated and

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[111]Harry F. Noyes III, "Like It or Not, The Armed Forces Need the Media," *Army Magazine*, June 1992, 33.

[112]Leonard Pitts, "Journalism once again is under fire," *The Dallas Morning News*, 8 December 2001, 33A.

[113]William V. Kennedy, *The Military and the Media* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), x.

informed population; the media contributes to this education and provides the information. The military must simply acknowledge the realities of how the press works and seek to engage it in a manner beneficial to itself.

The criteria of providing access, context of events and logistical support balanced with operational security provide a means by which the military can evaluate the effectiveness of its media engagement. While the criteria serve as a means to examine past operations and can inform one of how to cover future operations, effective media engagement also requires a proactive mindset. A proactive mindset entails actively seeking to derive the best coverage possible – leveraging the media to positively effect the public and current operations.

Leveraging the Media

Leveraging the media is simply the military's effective engagement of the media to positively inform public perception of the military and its operations. In warfare, particularly insurgent warfare, leveraging the media ensures that the story the military wants told is in the public's consciousness before the enemy's story. If the military is always reacting to news stories, it is losing the media battle and its own credibility and legitimacy. Part of putting the military's story out first is also readily admitting that mistakes or tragedies have occurred and making them public before an adversary has the opportunity to spin the story in a manner that benefits him. If the military accepts that the public is an important part of Clausewitz's trinity, then helping ensure that that part of the trinity understands military objectives creates a synergistic effect which helps maintain each part of the trinity.[114] To do this effectively, it might be best to think about media engagement for the military using an effects-based approach.

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[114]James J. McHugh, LtCdr, U.S. Navy, "The Media Factor: An Essential Ingredient to Operational Success," (Naval War College, 1997), 6.

An effects-based approach, with regards to the media, refers to a focus on an operation's actions and their links to behavior, stimulus and response.[115] For the military-media relationship, this means that one engages the media with a long view of how the public perceives the military and rejects a "repair service"[116] mindset, which typically only thinks about media effects when something negative has occurred. When negative events occur, the military must present the information in a forthright manner. For example, the military knew about the Abu Ghraib prison problems months before the public stumbled across photos on the Internet. Had the military presented the scandal, it could have salvaged the integrity that comes with being honest. This mindset demands that the military accept the media as potential allies and engage the media in as many mediums as possible. Engaging through all possible mediums is especially important when one thinks of the potential effects the media has. When discussing the Persian Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush commented, "I learn more from CNN than I do from the CIA." His press secretary added, "In most kinds of international crises now, we virtually cut out the State Department and the desk officer…Their reports are still important, but they don't get there in time for the basic decisions to be made."[117]

To ensure that information provided through the media is accurate enough to inform decision makers, operational commanders must develop a well-resourced, responsive infrastructure to conduct media relations.[118] In order to be successful, a business must anticipate customers' desires. The same is true of effective media engagement. In order to shape its relationship with the media, the military must anticipate the media's requests and actively seek to help the media attain its objectives. If military leaders fail to do this on a regular basis, they are

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[115]Edward A. Smith, *Effects Based Operations: Applying Network Centric Warfare in Peace, Crises, and War* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program, 2002),105-117.

[116]Dietrich Dorner, *The Logic of Failure* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 59.

[117]Lewis Friedland, *Covering the World: International Television News Services* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1992), 7; quoted in Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars," *Parameters*, (Autumn 1994), 38.

[118]Charles W. Ricks, "The Military-News Media Relationship: Thinking Forward," (U.S. Army War College, 1993), vi.

effectively abandoning the media, which in their effort to publish news will fill the void with material potentially critical of the military.

The difficulty with engaging the media over the long-term is that it is difficult to measure success. There must be, on the part of the military, the notion that there is no end-state but rather a steady-state of interaction characterized in terms of credibility and cooperation. Towards that end, the military must seek to develop long-term relationships with media organizations. Prior to OIF, the military sought to prepare journalists for conflict by running boot camps for them. After the ground phase of OIF though, did the military try to maintain contact with those journalists that had reported so favorably for the military and had, through their embed experience, a better understanding of the military? If not, a chance to foster potentially beneficial long-term relationships may have slipped away.[119] The embed experience produced a new generation of war correspondents and a generation of soldiers not only comfortable speaking with the media but good at it—representing the military with the candor of the common soldier and showing the public the difficult, dangerous work they perform on their behalf. Leveraging the media is more than just the policy by which the military permits the media to cover the military during operations. It is a continual process of proactive engagement.

Effective Media Engagement: An Information Age Principle of War?

To ensure that the military's effort to engage the media does not simply result in an annex buried at the back of an operations order, the military should elevate media effects to an information age principle of war. Elevating the importance of effective media engagement means that media engagement should not solely be the purview of a command's Public Affairs Officer, but of the entire command. The enemies of the United States have long recognized the importance of effective media engagement, yet the military relegates public affairs planning to an

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[119]James Lacey, "Who's Responsible for Losing the Media War in Iraq?" *Proceedings*, (October 2004), Available from http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent1?file=NI-1004-Media-P1; Internet; accessed 18 November 2004.

afterthought. The military must realize that media planning is not a stand-alone issue, but one that affects every other principle of war a commander might try to rely on. The nation's enemies, recognizing their inability to match the United States head-to-head in conventional warfare, have more quickly realized the power of the media to both garner support and attack the American public's will to fight. The military though, up until OIF, has sought to hold the press at arms length—attempting to avoid the potential downsides of a mutually beneficial relationship but at the same time not fully taking advantage of the potential upside.

The Vietnam War provided the United States with its first true taste of what can happen if policy and action conflict with one another in the press—slowly eroding public support and making military efforts increasingly untenable. The military should assume that the media will aggressively seek to cover any conflict that the United States. may participate in. As such, commanders should recognize the media's presence and plan accordingly to benefit from its coverage.[120] Commanders must realize however that just as they may benefit from media coverage, so might the enemy – generating negative effects by virtue of the media covering controversial events. To counter this, the military must develop a mindset determined to take advantage of the upsides of media coverage while effectively engaging the media to minimize the effects of potential downsides.

Closing Remarks

The historical record shows that while the military is willing to address symptoms of its poor relationship with the media, it tends not to address the long-term underlying reasons for that tension—one of the reasons different conflicts have brought about different media policies. Knowing the tensions that exist between the two institutions will never completely evaporate, the military must consider what it can do to minimize the effects of those tensions. A complete plan

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[120]Lisa Squire, "Mass Media: The Tenth Principle of War?" (U.S. Naval War College, 1995), 2.

to leverage the media is the key to a successful military-media relationship. It must be a continual process and those engaged in the dialogue must be truthful and forthright.

Conclusions

This paper posed the question, "How can the U.S. military proactively engage domestic and international media in the planning and execution of military operations?" By examining the history of the military-media relationship, Joint Doctrine, comparing the unique cultures of both institutions and offering suggestions to better shape the military-media relationship, it has served to better inform readers of how the military might better engage the media. This engagement is not only important for the military; it also helps to inform American citizens increasingly separated from their military since the end of the draft.

Between the Vietnam War and OIF, the military-media relationship gradually improved, but not without problems. Following Vietnam, the military viewed the media with increased skepticism, a skepticism whose effects still influence how it engages the media. During Urgent Fury, the media was all but shut out of the operation and the American public only learned what occurred days afterward. In Just Cause, the situation between the military and the media started to improve although the military was slow to accommodate the press or provide support. Operation Desert Storm found a military much more willing to engage the media, but only on its terms. Sequestering journalists, controlling much of their movements, aggressively reviewing reports, and censoring video became the military's modus operandi. The military's impressive operational success coupled with equally impressive laser guided munitions footage enthralled a public not fully aware that they were missing the whole story. In each of these cases, many in the media felt that the Pentagon had either shut out the media or duped it into only providing the public with its story.

Finally in OIF, due to a savvy embed program, managed at the individual reporter level, the military provided unprecedented access to the media. Reporters lived with units and provided

a soldier's level of perspective as the armed forces fought its way to Baghdad. The military meanwhile provided a greater level of context by conducting its own briefings and aiding network television analysts. The coverage enthralled a public, glued to the ultimate reality TV show.

While the embed program was an overwhelming success during the drive to Baghdad, during the insurgency the embed program started to provide reasons why the military and the Administration might not always want to permit embedding—but not by its own volition. Disparities between what the Administration said and images on the television highlighted similarities between coverage during OIF and Vietnam. When the Bush Administration displayed "Mission Accomplished" on an aircraft carrier as a backdrop to a presidential speech at a time when soldiers and Marines were still in harm's way in Iraq, it highlighted leadership out of tune with operational realities. The video of a Marine shooting an apparently unarmed Iraqi insurgent also showed the problems with embedding. Namely, that embedding catches both the positive and the negative – possibly resulting in an incoherent message. The embed program wildly departed from previous military engagement policies and left the media wondering not why the military did not include them but how could they, the media, can do a better job. The military had finally placed the ball on the media's side of the court.

Recommendations

The embed media program, while a vast improvement in the military-media engagement relationship, only represents policy in regards to news coverage of a single operation. To continue on the successful path started by embedding, the military must search for ways to further engage and develop a positive relationship with the media. By increasing recognition of the importance of media engagement in doctrine, the military can better take advantage of the force multiplier effects the media can provide the military. To that end, and centered on the idea that public affairs is not just a PAO's issue, the military should make improvements in the following areas: (1) Establishment of media effects as an information age principle of war; (2) Continued

use of embedded reporters, expanding on the current program to ensure coverage after what is thought of as the combat phase; (3) Develop a more proactive approach towards dealing with foreign media; and (4) Promotion of a more assertive media policy to achieve a steady-state level of military-media engagement

By establishing media effects as an information age principle of war, the military would take media engagement out of what historically has been the sole purview of the PAO and place it in the commander's hands. Additionally, it would formally recognize that the military should not only operate under principles of war developed during Napoleonic and Industrial Age conflict; that the Information Age comes with its own set of realities which need addressing.[121] If elevated to an information age principle of war, media engagement has potential education and training implications.

Embedded reporters during OIF demonstrated that soldiers knew how to effectively interact with the media. The unscripted comments of soldiers did a better job of reinforcing the corresponding selfless service and toughness of military members better than any advertising campaign could hope to do. Training is required, however, to ensure service members understand that when they speak to a reporter, he or she is speaking for the military and that their statements may have operational and strategic implications. These potential implications require that interacting with the media be part of routine field exercises and that soldiers have an understanding of not only their tactical mission, but also the larger operational and strategic context as well. In addition to soldier training, PAOs should receive first-hand media education and exposure by participating in a one-year-long Training-With-Industry (TWI) program. By immersing themselves in a media organization, they will not only gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the media business, but also develop long-term relationships with those in the media. Correspondingly, the military should invite the media to participate in military training

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[121]Kaplan, Robert D. Guest Lecturer, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: 10 December 2004).

and educational symposiums, akin to the boot camps that occurred prior to OIF, but designed to give a more generalist view of the military instead of only a soldier's perspective. In an effort to cross international cultural differences, the above military-media relationship building blocks should be extended to the foreign press, when appropriate, as well. As the military is increasingly the United States' most visible international representative, it behooves the military to try to develop a relationship with the foreign press as well.

Although not discussed in great detail, the military must also consider how it interacts and engages the foreign press. This is particularly true in the contemporary operating environment. The United States looks for international partners in the execution of foreign policy and military action, and often perception is as important as reality. In OIF, although American media was heavily and successfully engaged, the foreign press, particularly that of Middle Eastern countries, was conspicuously absent. In the case of the foreign press, the military should engage early and often and not permit vacuums of information to exist that could potentially be filled with coverage detrimental to the military's cause.

Finally, the military's senior leaders must meet and discuss the media-military relationship with their peers in the media. Senior public affairs officers should sponsor recurring conferences, bringing representatives of the two sides together in order to erase negative stereotypes and develop mutual understanding. Increasing the importance of the media and stressing the importance of engaging it effectively may cause a cultural shift to occur – one that recognizes the potential benefits of thinking about media engagement in an effects-based approach – ready to take advantage of the positive while effectively engaging in order to minimize potential pitfalls.

By all accounts, the current embed program has been a success, but it did not go far enough to ensure reporters stayed with military units as they conducted "Phase IV" operations and it did not effectively incorporate foreign, non-coalition, media. The application of the evaluation criteria presented in this paper might have led planners to conclude that effective

media engagement was even more important during post hostilities than during the assault towards Baghdad. Using those criteria, specifically context, might also have highlighted the need to present a coherent media strategy[122] – one that links political leaders' statements with that of the operational commander and the soldiers and Marines in the field. By effectively engaging and leveraging the media during this phase of the operation, the military may better counter an insurgency adept at manipulating the media for its own purpose and continue to shore up not only public support for the troops but for the Administration's war policies.

Finally, the military must promote a more effective steady-state level of engagement with the media. The military-media relationship should not experience the peaks and valleys indicative of those operations described in this paper. Some of the ideas above such as TWI and senior leader symposiums would go a long way towards a more effective level of engagement. In an effort to create a steady-state level of engagement, the military must promote efforts to re-establish those ties created during OIF. By maintaining ties with formerly embedded journalists, a necessary public dialogue, aided by and taking place in the media, could occur. In an era during which an increasingly smaller percentage of Americans have any contact with the military, the military must take the lead to develop a positive working relationship with the press and the public. In doing so, the military will provide the foundation that not only benefits it now, but in the future.

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[122]Ibid.

Appendix A: Principles for News Media Coverage of DOD Operations[123]

The following principles have been adopted by representatives of major American news media and the Pentagon to be followed in any future combat situation involving American troops.

1. Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations.

2. Pools are not to serve as the standard of covering U.S. military operations. But pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity – within 24 to 36 hours when possible. The arrival of early-access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.

3. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited.

4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the U.S. military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect U.S. forces and their operations. Violation of the ground rules can result in suspension of the credentials and expulsion from the combat zone of the journalists involved. News organizations will make their best effort to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with U.S. military operations.

5. Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special Operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.

6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.

7. Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders will permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools.

8. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAOs with facilities to enable timely, secure compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic operational security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.

9. These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DOD National Media Pool System.

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[123]Ibid., *JP 3-61*, I-2.

Appendix B: CJCS Media-Military Relations Panel (Sidle Panel Recommendations)[124]

Statement of Principle: The American people must be informed about United States military operations and this information can best be provided through both the news media and the Government. Therefore, the panel believes it is essential that the U.S. new media cover U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with mission security and the safety of U.S. forces.

1. That public affairs planning for military operations be conducted concurrently with operational planning.

2. When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should provide for the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary before "full coverage" is feasible.

3. That, in connection with the use of pools, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend to the Secretary of Defense that he study the matter of whether to use a pre-established and constantly updated accreditation or notification list of correspondents in case of a military operation for which a pool is required or the establishment of a news agency list for use in the same circumstances.

4. That a basic tenet governing media access to military operations should be voluntary compliance by the media with security guidelines or ground rules established and issued by the military. These rules should be as few as possible and should be worked out during the planning process for each operation. Violations would mean exclusion of the correspondent(s) concerned form further coverage of the operation.

5. Public affairs planning for military operations should include sufficient equipment and qualified military personnel whose function is to assist correspondents in covering the operation adequately.

6. Planners should carefully consider media communications requirements to assure the earliest feasible availability. However, these communications must not interfere with combat and combat support operations. If necessary and feasible, plans should include communications facilities dedicated to the news media.

7. Planning factors should include provision for intra and inter-theater transportation support of the media.

8. A program be undertaken by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs for top military public affairs representatives to meet with news organization leadership, to include meetings with individual news organizations, on a reasonably regular basis to discuss mutual problems, including relationship with the media during military operations and exercises.

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[124]Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), *CJCS Media-Military Relations Panel* (Sidle Panel). (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense 1984), available from http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA416788; Internet; accessed 27 November 2004.

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